

NISH Aspires to Lead the Nation in Green Janitorial Services



The average adult inhales 3,400 gallons of air per day. Unfortunately for many office workers, chemicals, mold spores, pollutants and other allergy causing pollutants may be circulating in the building, jeopardizing the health of the occupants. If an office building with contaminated air also houses a daycare facility, the health of children may also be at risk. Since youth have a lower threshold than adults for tolerating exposures to harmful chemicals, the health threat to children in a building with contaminated air is more severe.

In recognition of this and other related problems,

two years ago, the U.S. government added a requirement (#23.703) to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). It requires executive agencies to identify and purchase environmentally preferable products and services. The regulation states that agencies must maximize the utilization of environmentally preferable products based on guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and promotes the use of non-hazardous and recovered materials.

"The regulations mandating green janitorial services for federal agencies are in place, but the news is filtering

out slowly to contracting officers," said Blaine Robinson, NISH operations manager. Robinson is the official NISH "green guy" offering consulting and training on green cleaning solutions.

NISH strongly supports the use of environmentally preferable products and practices in all aspects of federal contracting through the JWOD Program and janitorial services in particular. NISH recently announced that it seeks to help position community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) that perform cleaning services as leaders of "green" janitorial services.

"The use of environmen-

tally preferable products and practices is important, not only for the protection of the environment, but more importantly, to protect the health of workers on JWOD contracts and their customers," said Bob Chamberlin, president and CEO, NISH. "NISH wants to help develop green cleaning solutions for customers today and in the near future so that when demand for such services shoots upward, as we fully expect it to do in the near future, CRPs will be ahead of the curve and the obvious choice to fulfill green janitorial services contracts both for government and

NISH and Green Cleaning

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**CRP Case Study:
The Chimes**

**Green Janitorial
Services:
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NISH Aspires to Lead the Nation ...



Above: These greening products are available from BISM, a NIB-affiliated agency in Baltimore, Md. This environmentally preferable product is based on hydrogen peroxide to replace chlorine for removing mold and mildew in bathrooms. It is an EPA Registered Sanitizer and can replace traditional disinfectants (i.e. quats and phenols) for most cleaning situations. Photo Courtesy of EnvirOxi
Right: This backpack vacuum cleaner, made by ProTeam, is efficient at capturing dust by the Carpet & Rug Institute and has a multi-stage filtration unit that is extremely effective. Photo Courtesy of ProTeam.



Left: An entryway matting system can reduce the amount of dirt entering a building and, thus, can make cleaning more efficient. Note that the picture shows mats both inside and outside the doors, and the mats are long enough so that each foot hits the mat two times to most effectively dry and capture any dirt. Photo courtesy of 3M.

commercial enterprises.”

There is strong support in government for NISH taking this leadership role.

“It is just good business to create a cleaner, safer, healthier environment for the JWOD-associated employees who perform cleaning tasks, the federal personnel who work in the buildings, and for citizens who visit these same facilities,” said Lee Wilson, Jr., executive director of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (the



is an area where there has been a lot of anecdotal activity on the part of federal agencies,” said Julie Shannon, branch chief, EPA Pollution Prevention Division. “NISH provides an opportunity for federal agencies to institutionalize green cleaning services in the federal establishment.”

In launching its green cleaning initiative, NISH has partnered with an acknowledged expert in the nation, Steve Ashkin of The Ashkin Group. In the new book “Environmentalism Unbound,” Ashkin is described as the “leading advocate for a stronger environmental profile among cleaning product manufacturers and suppliers” and “the most visible industry figure advancing the cause of environmentally preferable products.” Ashkin was chairman of the task force that wrote the national cleaning standard—*Standard Guide on Stewardship for Cleaning Commercial & Institutional Buildings (ASTM E 1971)* and introduced the concept of “green” cleaning into the commercial cleaning industry. Ashkin is actively involved with several U.S.

government agencies to develop guidance on green cleaning; he is a past member of the board of directors for the U.S. Green Building Council and he has authored more than 75 articles on green cleaning.

Ashkin notes that the majority of private cleaning companies have not yet developed green cleaning systems so by filling this existing gap, NISH CRPs can expect to greatly expand their janitorial business. He also points out that “greening” an office building is not just about recycling paper and being energy efficient. It encompasses everything from the materials used to construct the building to the processes and products used to clean it.

The switch from traditional janitorial cleaning services to a green cleaning program is happening nationwide today with increasing frequency, especially at federal facilities. Ashkin and Robinson insist that’s because the demand for green cleaning services is not something coming in the near future, it is in demand today. “It’s happening now and will continue to happen,” Robinson said. “Four years from now, all janitorial services will be required to be green, so it makes sense for CRPs to implement green cleaning programs now rather than try to play catch-up after a major customer makes it a contract requirement.”

Switching Over To Green Cleaning

Whether the impetus is trying to be a leader or responding to specific contract requirements, a green cleaning program must be comprehensive in order to succeed. “It involves much more than just utilizing environmentally preferable products,” Ashkin said. “It

includes understanding the procedures by which the products are used, the interactions with the building occupants, training and good communications. The goal is to reduce the total impact on both health and the environment and you can’t achieve that by using a single bio-based product.”

Implementing a green cleaning program is a comprehensive process. NISH summarizes the key changes a CRP must carry out into a five-step implementation process:

1. Agreement—ensure the customer, tenant organizations, and the building management agree on how they define a “green” janitorial program. Then make sure that understanding is clearly written into the contract.

2. Build the Team—Build a stewardship team from building management, tenant representatives and the CRP to communicate about the new green janitorial program and management expectations. This can generate support and resources that will contribute to the success of the new program.

3. Conduct Surveys to Quantify Improvements—Once the team is assembled, they should participate in facility/housekeeping surveys. The surveys will set baselines for improvement and typically include an inventory of existing cleaning chemicals, paper, liners, equipment, general housekeeping quality (looking for opportunities to make improvements), recycling, procedures, existing indoor air quality problems and more. This will enable a CRP to later quantify the improvements it makes with the green janitorial services program.

4. Develop a Plan—Once the data has been collected it should be analyzed to deter-

mine the best opportunities for improvement and to prioritize options. This is the time to look for and document the changes being proposed in products, procedures and other pollution prevention strategies (for example adding an entryway mat and using better vacuums).

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President and CEO, NISH.

5. Get Everyone Onboard—It is often tempting to skip this step and just get down to work. However, laying out the plan to everyone involved before beginning implementation will result in stronger support and “buy-in” by the building occupants and building managers and will go a long way toward helping to meet expectations. In addition, it is important that everyone understands a green janitorial program cannot make the building “perfect” and ensure that no one, no

matter how sensitive they are, will ever have a health reaction to the new green products. Rather, the goal is to make the building better by reducing impacts to health and the environment compared to the previous cleaning program.

The Costs Involved

Ashkin and Robinson emphasized that there is little if any extra cost involved in switching over to a green cleaning program. In some cases, green cleaning will reduce costs and these observations are true both for the customer and the CRP. Ashkin said the only instances where he has seen costs increase is at buildings where, in order to drive costs down, building management had reduced the amount of cleaning so drastically that the building was not being cleaned sufficiently to protect the health of the occupants. “If a building is being adequately cleaned from a health standpoint, it should not be any more expensive to use clean green practices,” Ashkin said.

Green Cleaning Issues Unique to People with Disabilities

Ashkin and Robinson note that people with disabilities suffer from a higher incident of health problems than the rest of the population and are less likely to report health problems when they do occur. Therefore, lowering the hazards associated with janitorial cleaning products also reduces the chances clients will suffer a health symptom as a result of product exposure.

For training or consultation about green cleaning, please contact Blaine Robinson, NISH, at 571-226-4646 or brobinson@nish.org.

More information is also available from the following environmental education links:

■ www.epa.gov/oppt/epp—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Web site. EPP is a federal-wide program that encourages and assists executive agencies in the purchasing of environmentally preferable products and services. This site has a wealth of information about janitorial green products and practices as well as links to many other Web sites related to the subject. Also, be sure to look through the “documents” section (www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/documents/docs.htm).

■ www.dep.state.pa.us/deputate/fieldops/sw/hpsp/appendix_2.htm—The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Guidelines for Green Building Housekeeping and Maintenance. This Web site was written by NISH’s consulting expert on green cleaning, Steve Ashkin, and offers the step-by-step information necessary for completing a green janitorial services building survey and how to develop and maintain a green building indoor environment. The “green building links” section (<http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/fieldops/sw/hpsp/GreenBuilding.htm>) also provides a long list of Web sites that can provide you with more detailed information about virtually any aspect of green buildings. ●

CRP Case Study:

The Chimes



Left: Gloria Swann, The Chimes, uses a Genius Smart Vac equipped with hepa filters.

The evolution away from traditional business practices to environmentally preferable—or “green”—products and processes is growing. The federal government and an increasing number of companies in the U.S. now view environmental responsibility as part of their corporate strategy and critical to their future competitiveness.

NISH fully embraces this change and believes that the “greening” of Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD) products and services is advantageous not only for the environment, but also for every organization’s bottom line.

U.S. government regulations mandating green janitorial services reflect a similar philosophy and signal the inevitable shift to green cleaning that every CRP will have to make if it wishes to provide janitorial services to the federal government.

NISH is committed to positioning CRPs as national leaders in providing green janitorial services. The following story outlines the experiences and lessons learned by one CRP that manages nearly two-dozen green janitorial service contracts with government agencies throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

The Chimes Baltimore, Maryland

Annually, The Chimes over- sees some \$50 million worth of green compliant janitorial work. It is a multi-service organization that serves and supports thousands of people. It operates in Maryland, Delaware, Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Israel. It is one of the largest janitorial contractors within the General Services Administration’s (GSA’s) National Capital Region. Additionally, in and around Washington, D.C.,

The Chimes janitorial services customers include the Department of the Interior, Department of Commerce, two floors of The Pentagon, Library of Congress, Andrews Air Force Base, Veterans Administration Headquarters, Baltimore-Washington International Airport and many more.

Until last year, The Chimes provided traditional janitorial cleaning services. It took some urging by NISH to convince **Mike Payne, The Chimes D.C. director of operations**, to switch over to a green cleaning system.

“At first, making such a change was a turnoff to me because I believed it would upset the whole tea cart of our existing system,” Payne said. “Our sinks and toilets were clean, all our products had been approved. Everything was fine, so why should we change? I believed green cleaning was some sort of environmental extremism.

“Then I learned just how toxic many cleaning products were—fluids that are put on floors, walls and eventually pouring down drains. Our properties are close to the Chesapeake Bay and all the toxic cleaning fluids that cleaning contracts use, such as ammoniated strippers, go into the sewer and ultimately may make their way into some natural water system like the Chesapeake. That’s

when I realized green cleaning is about preserving the whole environment.”

Payne also pointed out that switching over to green cleaning involves much more than using new products. All cleaning tools should also be analyzed to evaluate whether or not they are environmentally preferable. For example, Payne noted that maid carts ideally should be composed of recycled plastics, mop buckets, wringers, trash liners and other items also should be made from recycled materials.

Making the Switch

In August 2001, NISH asked The Chimes to present a janitorial services proposal to the Department of Interior (DOI). Since the DOI was green compliant, The Chimes proposal had to meet requirements for environmentally preferable supplies, equipment, paper towels, cleaning materials, cleaning processes, etc.

After The Chimes’ first proposal was rejected, the organization went back to the drawing board and learned all it could about green cleaning. The Chimes re-submitted to the DOI a second green janitorial services proposal and won the contract with guidance from the **DOI’s building manager, Gary Peacock**; NISH; the green cleaning products manufac-



turer, **Rochester Midland**; and The Chimes distributor, **Eagle Maintenance**.

“Now we are this big green monster,” Payne joked. “We have transformed all of our janitorial services, government and commercial contracts, into green cleaning contracts. The result has been a cost savings to our customers, the realization that green cleaning products really work and the satisfaction of knowing the products are much more beneficial to the environment and human health.”

Payne described Peacock and **NISH’s green cleaning services proponent, Blaine Robinson** as the “motivating forces” behind the change at The Chimes and said they continue to be supportive. With their assistance, The Chimes implemented green cleaning stewardship plans (involving building management, tenant representatives and The Chimes staff) at three government locations.

Challenges

The Chimes faced two major hurdles in making the switch to green janitorial services, Payne said. First, the CRP had to convince onsite managers and front-line employees that the new system would meet performance requirements. Next, the organization had to be certain contracts would

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stay within budget.

The Chimes overcame the first hurdle by having its supplier demonstrate products to managers and onsite cleaning staff. By doing so, the supplier and the building manager also could address any special cleaning issues specific to the building.

According to Payne, to everyone’s surprise, meeting budgetary constraints turned out to be a relatively easy task. Using environmentally preferable cleaning products turned out to be no more expensive—and in some cases, less expensive—than the products previously used by The Chimes. Also, the organization was able to keep costs down during the transition by phasing in the new products and returning some



Far left: Agnes Fobay, The Chimes, washes windows at the DOI with environmentally friendly cleaning products.

Left: Gloria Swann, The Chimes, cleans the main entrance at DOI using Enviro-care glass cleaner.

and services offer a world of untapped business opportunities.

“At The Chimes, we decided we wanted to be leaders and not followers with this initiative and we are proud to make that happen,” Payne said.

More Information

For training or consultation about green cleaning, please contact Blaine Robinson, NISH, at 571-226-4646 or brobinson@nish.org.

To confer with Mike Payne, The Chimes, about his experiences making the switch to green cleaning, contact him at 410-358-5553 or mpayne@chimes.org.

Additional information is also available from the following environmental education Web sites:

■ www.epa.gov/oppt/epp: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Web site.

■ www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/fieldops/sw/hpsp/appendix_2.htm: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Guidelines for Green Building Housekeeping and Maintenance.

■ www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/fieldops/sw/hpsp/GreenBuilding.htm: The “green building links” section of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Guidelines for Green Building Housekeeping and Maintenance. ●

The Department of the Interior



Custodial work at the **Washington, D.C. headquarters complex of the Department of the Interior (DOI)** has turned as green as the agency's mission.

The DOI is one of a growing number of federal agencies or private-industry businesses that are convinced environmentally responsible business practices are critical to their success as well as the future health of the planet.

NISH agrees with this strategy and is committed to positioning JWOD-associated CRPs as national leaders in providing green janitorial services. In the December 2002 edition of *Workplace*, NISH reported on the lessons learned by one CRP—**The Chimes, based in Baltimore, Md.**—that transformed all of its custodial work to green cleaning practices and now manages nearly two-dozen

green janitorial services contracts with U.S. government agencies.

The Chimes decided to make the switch to green cleaning when it began work on an environmentally preferable janitorial services contract provided, through the JWOD Program, by the DOI national headquarters complex.

The following story outlines the experiences and insights of that federal customer, including why the DOI decided to shift to an environmentally preferable system for cleaning its offices; how it went about developing requirements for a green janitorial services agreement; and its experiences managing a green cleaning contract.

Deciding to Make the Switch

The DOI Washington, D.C. headquarters complex encompasses two buildings with 1.4

million gross square feet that hold some 2,500 government office workers. A visit to the buildings reveals that they function a lot like a small city.

Gary Peacock began working as an assistant building manager for the headquarters complex in 1988 and took over the position of manager seven years ago. Over the years, Peacock and his staff received numerous and repeated complaints from individuals who were allergic to or sensitive to some of the cleaning products used by the building's janitorial crews.

"My personal pet peeve was the discharge from old, large vacuum cleaners that blow out small, harmful particles right back into the air," Peacock said. "So a few years ago, I decided to examine what could be done to improve the quality of living for tenants. The mis-

sion of the DOI is environmentally related – the preservation of our wonderful public lands. My team and I felt it was in keeping with that mission to be at the forefront of environmentally sensitive cleaning."

Existing Federal Mandates

At about the same time as Peacock decided he wanted to make the switch to green cleaning, the U.S. government added a requirement to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR Part 23.703). It requires executive agencies to identify and purchase environmentally preferable products and services. The regulation states that agencies must maximize the utilization of environmentally preferable products based on guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and promotes the use of non-hazardous and recovered materials.

Prior to the FAR, Executive Order 13101 on "Greening the Government Through Waste Prevention, Recycling and Federal Acquisition" required federal procurement officers to consider environmental factors in their purchasing and contracting decisions and directed the EPA to develop guidance to address environmentally preferable purchasing.

EPA established the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program (EPP) in response to the Executive Order and developed guiding principles for applying environmentally preferable purchasing in the government setting. Today, EPP clauses are included in a growing number of federal contracts.

Defining Contract Requirements

For help in making the switch at the DOI headquarters complex, Peacock turned to **Environmental Protection**

Specialist Heather Davies, a staff member of the **Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEC)** within the Office of the Secretary of DOI. The OEC teamed up with **Blaine Robinson, senior project manager, NISH** to develop green janitorial training for CRPs. OEC's mission is to further policies and practices for pollution prevention and waste management within the DOI's eight bureaus nationwide. It is no small undertaking. The DOI bureaus encompass approximately 33,000 buildings and 2,400 operating locations that support 70,000 employees and a total budget of \$13 billion.

"My objective is to educate DOI personnel to transition their own operations to green cleaning or to specify environmental performance attributes for cleaners when they contract janitorial services," Davies said.

Davies helped Peacock form an expert panel to evaluate the chemicals that would be used by each contractor bidding on the janitorial services contract at the DOI headquarters complex.

The first and foremost requirement was a significant level of efficacy for each cleaning product. The product had to work as well as traditional cleaning products, but also be as environmentally safe as possible. Peacock and the expert panel required contractors to describe why their products were considered to be environmentally preferable and that enabled the panel to review a wide range of products. As part of the source selection plan, 30 percent of the bid evaluation was based on the rating of the cleaners offered against these performance attributes.

Evaluating "Green" Proposals

"We decided to score each

DOI on Green Cleaning

The products are safer for employees – Looking at the "Material Safety Data Sheets" of green cleaners versus traditional cleaners, there are real differences; green cleaners are specifically formulated to have no carcinogens; be less caustic and flammable; less irritating to skin and respiratory systems and have less potential to interfere in reproduction.

Green cleaning is cost neutral or less expensive – As Gary Peacock, building manager, DOI Headquarters, discovered, green cleaning doesn't cost any more than traditional cleaning methods and, in some instances, green cleaning actually drives down costs.

Green products work – The products used at DOI's headquarters complex are environmentally preferable and do an excellent job, according to Peacock.

All products should be evaluated in the field – Some products do not perform as advertised by manufacturers and in many instances, Peacock said, "this could only be discovered after seeing the products used on a day-to-day basis." For example, one window cleaner cleans windows well, but it requires 75 percent more time to do the job. Ultimately, an alternative environmentally sensitive window cleaner had to be found.

Green cleaning operations require closer monitoring – Cleaning chemicals purchased in bulk form (to reduce waste) require mixing and some products are used for multiple cleaning purposes. The mixing ratio varies depending on the intended use. Peacock recommends mixing stations be monitored more closely than they are with traditional cleaning chemicals.

Tenant response is very positive – Since he switched to green cleaning, Peacock no longer has to handle the 5-15 complaints he used to receive daily from tenants who suffered from allergies and other negative health reactions to the harsh chemicals used in traditional custodial work. "Within three days of The Chimes carrying out green cleaning services at the DOI's headquarters complex, tenants were actually going out of their way to tell me how pleased they were," Peacock said. "That's truly remarkable when you realize that customer service experts say a dissatisfied customer will complain on average to 35 people, whereas a satisfied customer will tell an average of just five people. The positive feedback is a wonderful thing."

Build on the green cleaning experiences of others – Peacock discovered that selected companies have been great to work with, responsive to inquiries and willing to come on site to ensure the correct and best use of their products, while others fall short. They recommend contractors that want to offer green cleaning and federal agencies that want to make the switch to research the experience of other organizations like the DOI, and compile a list of names of recommended suppliers.

JWOD Program sources supply green cleaners – St. Louis Lighthouse for the Blind recently teamed up with Rochester-Midland to produce and sell a line of environmentally preferable cleaners, four of which were the first cleaning products certified against the Green Seal standard. This gives NISH CRPs the opportunity to support JWOD Program sources when they buy green products.

There is no reason for not making the switch – "Why damage the environment when there is no good reason, no cost savings or sacrifice in quality for doing so?" Peacock asked. "I know that this planet is something that we are holding as stewards for our children and grandchildren, and green cleaning makes a real difference. As a result of my green cleaning experiences, environmentally sensitive considerations are a part of my whole life today."

Interior Department...

bid giving significant weight to how green they were,” Peacock said. “We changed from requesting contract bids comprised of just two parts—a technical proposal and a pricing proposal—by adding a third part outlining the environmental proposal. For example, it had to detail the paper products and cleaning products that would be used. The expert panel researched all the information contained in the environmental proposals to verify the claims they made and went so far as to seek demonstrations and certifications that the products performed as they were described in the bid.”

Davis said the biggest challenge was that no standard

“The mission of the DOI is environmentally related—the preservation of our wonderful public lands. My team and I felt it was in keeping with that mission to be at the forefront of environmentally sensitive cleaning.”

—Gary Peacock, building manager, DOI Headquarters

existed at the time for a green cleaner. That changed since the Green Seal standard was adopted. It reduces the confusion about truly environmentally sensitive product manufacturing.

Evaluating proposals and selecting a contractor was a time consuming process, both for the DOI and the winning contractor—The Chimes. The benefits and



Alicia Myrick, The Chimes, cleans a display in the DOI main lobby using a micro fiber rag.

lessons learned, however, were invaluable.

Looking to the future, Peacock is confident that, in partnership with The Chimes and the OEC, green cleaning at DOI's headquarters complex will continue to develop new, innovative, environmentally preferable cleaning methods. In turn, Davies and the OEC will press ahead with efforts to implement green cleaning throughout all of the agency's buildings nationwide.

More Information

For training or consultation about green cleaning, please contact Blaine Robinson, senior project manager, NISH, at 571-226-4646 or brobinson@nish.org.

To learn more about the DOI's experiences with green cleaning, contact Gary Peacock, building manager, headquarters of the Department of the Interior, at 202-208-7560 or gary_w_peacock@nbc.gov. To confer with Heather Davies, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance at the Department of the Interior, call 202-208-7884 or e-mail heather_davies@ios.doi.gov. ♦



More Information about Green Cleaning and the Environment

- www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Web site has a vast amount of information about janitorial green products and practices as well as links to many other Web sites related to the subject. Be sure to look through the “documents” section located at www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/documents/docs.htm.
- <http://www.lhbindustries.com/enviro.htm>—The Lighthouse for the Blind in St. Louis now co-brands Rochester-Midland Environcare Products with Skilcraft, distributing and providing product support through four authorized dealers across the country. People with disabilities are employed to package and label these products.
- <http://webteam.nbc.gov/green/sustain/clean.html>—The Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance Web site contains a wealth of information about green cleaning and, most importantly, a guidebook and training materials that were created in partnership with NISH to instruct CRPs on how to make the transition to green cleaning practices and win green cleaning contracts at federal agencies.
- <http://www.greenseal.org/standards/industrialcleaners.htm>—Green Seal is an independent, non-profit organization that develops environmental standards and certifies products and services that, over their entire life cycle, cause less toxic pollution and waste, conserve resources and habitats, and minimize global warming and ozone depletion.

Blaine Robinson, operations manager/engineer, NISH National Office, and Gisele McAuliffe, contributing writer, NISH *Workplace* news magazine, collaborated on the writing of these articles.